

Official urges residents to protect against West Nile virus

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

State and local public health departments announced on Monday that three birds from Forsyth County have tested positive for West Nile virus. In all, 12 counties in North Carolina have confirmed the presence of the virus in birds.

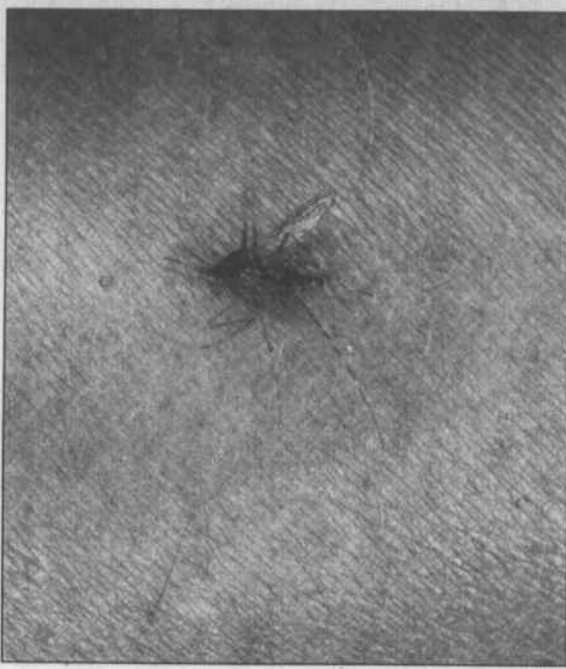
West Nile virus, originally from Europe, was first found in this country back in 1999 in New York City. West Nile virus was first detected in North Carolina two years ago.

The virus is not known to pass directly from birds to humans but is transmitted from mosquitoes that bite infected birds and then bite humans. If a human is infected, the virus may cause flu-like symptoms such as headache, swollen glands, muscle aches and a rash. West Nile virus causes mild disease in humans, and in some rare cases it can lead to encephalitis and death. Elderly people with low immune systems are apparently most at risk for developing the virus.

"There is no treatment especially for (West Nile) virus infection. The great majority of people who become infected never know it because they have no symptoms," said Tim Monroe, director of the Forsyth County Public Health Department in Winston-Salem, who also said the odds of someone developing life-threatening health complications are one in 150 people.

While North Carolina has yet to come across a human case of West Nile virus, public health departments are still urging residents to take precautions against mosquito bites that could lead to an infection of the disease. Eliminating mosquito breeding traps such as bird baths, flowerpots, stopped-up gutters and rain barrels can reduce homeowners' chances of attracting large mosquito populations.

"Obviously people will be bitten in North Carolina, especially during summertime. Early symptoms are flu-like, and anytime anyone has been exposed to a mosquito and develops symptoms they should be evaluated by a physician," said Monroe.



File Photo

Health officials are warning residents to use products to protect against mosquito bites.

who mentioned that the odds are still very low of an individual contracting the virus.

According to Monroe, most people breed their own mosquitoes without even knowing it. Failing to turn over birdbaths, dog bowls or old tires in and around the home contribute to the creation of mosquito breeding grounds. Refreshing standing water simply is not enough to combat mosquitoes. In a matter of a few days, Monroe said, people will see a mosquito develop from an egg to a full adult.

Rain is another element that will attract large numbers of mosquitoes, and Monroe believes the recent drought in the Piedmont Triad has "probably slowed the progress somewhat" of the virus popping up in the area.

The best way to protect oneself from being bitten by a mosquito, said Monroe, is to "limit the time spent outdoors," particularly around dawn or dusk. Applying an insect repellent containing DEET (with a concentration of 30 percent or less) to the skin is also a major mos-

quito deterrent when going outdoors. DEET is also a good protection against other tick-borne diseases.

According to Monroe, other types of regular insect repellent "fall short in terms of effectiveness." Extra precaution must be taken when applying insect repellent containing DEET with children between the ages 6 months and 12 years old, so parents must be sure to read labels thoroughly. Wearing long-sleeve tops and pants is also a good way to minimize the risk of mosquito bites.

Local health officials will decide to spray for mosquitoes if the area becomes densely populated with mosquitoes and also dependent on the weather. Surveillance and testing in the rest of the state through mosquito and dead bird collection will continue by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Public Health Pest Management.

Residents are asked by public health officials to report dead crows, blue jays, hawks or owls at (877) 790-1747.

Freshmen

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He was more concerned with what the university had to offer him academically, he said.

"I'm hoping to grow as an individual here, academically as well as socially," said Joseph Martinez.

Ismael and Laura Martinez said they too did take into consideration the small number of minority students at Wake. A month after father and son first visited the campus, Ismael and Laura Martinez visited the school, but this time without their son. After speaking with a number of minority students and the assistant director of admissions, Marcus Ingram, Laura Martinez said that she and her husband got "a really good feeling."

"My husband and I walked away feeling very good. That played an absolutely big part in our decision of where he wanted to go," said Laura Martinez. "Not only did we want him in a good atmosphere, but we wanted him to go to a school where his academic endeavors would be met, and I wanted him to be (socially) accepted."

But some black Wake students did give the school's racial makeup a second thought. Tiffany Settles, from Greenville, S.C., is also a freshman at the school. Settles, who plans to major in business, decided on WFU because of the curriculum offered in the Calloway School of Business.

When asked about any concerns about the minority student population at the school, Settles said, "At first I was iffy about going to a predominantly white school." But Settles said she was quickly put at ease by the campus community. Everyone, Settles said, from fellow students on campus to her dorm's resident advisers, has been more than willing to help her out.

As far as feeling any pressure, Settles said if she experiences any, it will be due to the school's intense academic standards and not because she is a student of color.

Wake Forest administrators are conscious of the small number of minority students at the school, but Ingram says WFU prefers to focus on catering to the diverse group of students that are represented on campus as they recruit more like them. Part of Ingram's job in the Office of Admissions and also as coordinator of multicultural recruitment is to search out students of color like Martinez and Granby who meet the academic criteria of the university.

"We are working to

increase multiculturalism and diversity on campus. It's really important just from a diversity perspective. But we also don't feel that the numbers are the only thing we need to work on because we also want to work (on) enhancing the environment that is already here. We work to increase understanding and acceptance and move to (a) place where we embrace all of our differences."



Granby

Ingram said.

According to Ingram, it is a seven-month process of seeking out potential students - majority and minority - to consider WFU to continue their education. Ingram's staff, student ambassadors and WFU alumni spend time traveling to high schools, corresponding with potential students via a letter-writing campaign and phone-a-thons and organizing events geared toward multicultural students.

Once students near the entrance application deadline, Ingram and staff then start to encourage students to go through a merit-based scholarship application process, one that is different from the general application process, in order to offset their college expenses if accepted.

"The university has a firm commitment to making sure there's a representation of students in a variety of merit programs. There is a tremendous emphasis on diversity here, and we try to make sure that those who are qualified are channeled into the right direction to obtain scholarships," Ingram said.

Clifton Granby's mother, Elizabeth Granby, attended the University of North Carolina and is confident that her son's exposure to her school, a pre-

dominantly white university, over the years prepared him for his college experience at Wake Forest.

"Not that we have anything against historically black colleges, it's just that we always looked at the (school that could provide) the best education," said Elizabeth Granby,

who has worries like any other parent sending his or her first child off to college.

The small class sizes at WFU appealed most to Clifton Granby along with the chance to receive a well-rounded liberal arts education.

"I just wanted to go to a prestigious university," said

Clifton Granby, who is also considering a degree in pre-med.

Clifton Granby mentioned that after visiting the campus last year, that the Office of Multicultural Affairs was "very adamant" about his being involved in campus life. The Office of Multicultural

Affairs also drove home to Granby that students of color like himself, can impact the lives of their fellow Deacons.

"I think I look forward to being involved in clubs and activities," Clifton said. "I expect (WFU) to be rigorous, challenging, fun and a change of pace."

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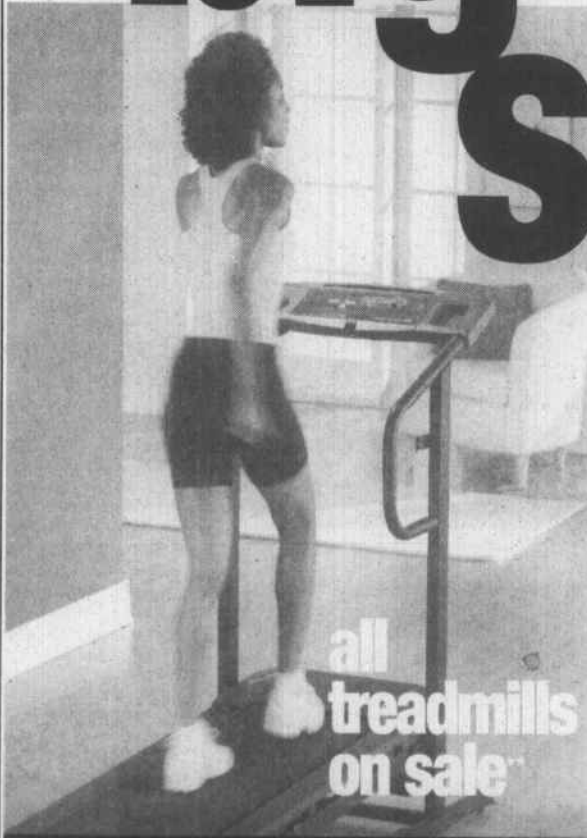
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